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ABSTRACT

This report describes the current status of evaluation findings for the Child Development Project (CDP), a project to bring about caring and responsible attitudes in students in kindergarten through grade 6. The program was begun in a suburban San Ramon, California school district in 1982, and has recently been introduced in urban, ethnically diverse Hayward, California. Classroom observations have indicated that teachers in classes using the program make greater use of developmental discipline and cooperative group learning; involve students more in helping activities; and promote prosocial values and interpersonal understanding more than teachers in nonprogram classrooms. Observations have also indicated that students in program classrooms exhibit more prosocial behavior than students in nonprogram classrooms, and that program classrooms are more harmonious than nonprogram classrooms. Interviews and questionnaires have indicated that students in program schools have better-developed conflict resolution skills and stronger democratic values than students in nonprogram schools. An appended description of the CDP explains the project's goal; summarizes the evaluation results; lists the key elements of CDP's classroom, schoolwide, and home-school programs; discusses the resources that are necessary for successful program implementation; and examines the reactions of teachers, administrators, and parents to the program. (BC)

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EVALUATION OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO DATE

January, 1991

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This report describes the current status of evaluation findings for the Child Development Project (CDP), a comprehensive elementary-school-based project that has been implemented, so far, in two northern California school districts. The initial work was done in San Ramon, California, where, beginning eight years ago, students in three schools took part in the CDP program throughout their elementary school careers, from kindergarten through sixth grade. In the San Ramon district, which is suburban and middle-class, the program produced favorable evaluation findings, as will be described below. To see whether similar program effects would be found in a different type of community, the program was recently introduced into two schools in Hayward, California, a community that is more urban and more diverse, both socioeconomically and ethnically. Program activities in Hayward are currently in their second year.

In San Ramon, an extensive evaluation has been underway from the start, examining both how well the program was implemented in classrooms and what outcomes it has had for students. The results of this study, along with preliminary results from an ongoing evaluation of the program in Hayward, are the focus of this report.

Research has always been an essential part of the Child Development Project. We have been committed to examining the way the program is actually carried out in the classrooms, and the effects it has had on students. Data have been collected for these purposes in the three program schools and in three similar comparison schools each year the project has been underway in San Ramon, using a variety of procedures (classroom observation, experimental small-group activities, teacher and student questionnaires and

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interviews) to give us numerous measures of program implementation and of the effects of the program on students.

In San Ramon, the program was implemented in successive grades year by year, beginning with kindergarten in 1982-83. The evaluation has been conducted in those same grades each year. A different approach is being taken in Hayward: there, the program is being implemented at all grades simultaneously, and the evaluation assessments are therefore conducted at several grade levels each year.

The research we have done in the San Ramon schools has demonstrated that the changes in educational practice called for by the CDP program can be achieved, and most importantly, that these changes directly benefit children in a number of ways.

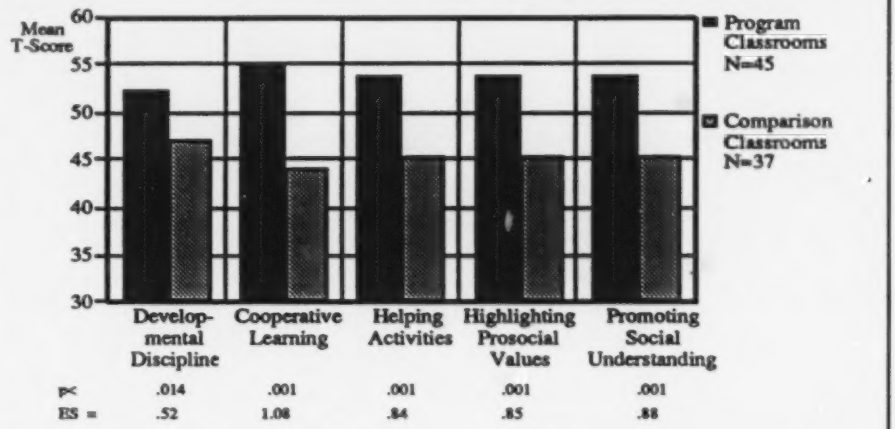
Conducting the Classroom Program

Classroom observations. We have assessed the implementation of the program in classrooms by observing what actually happens in them. Each school year a new set of observers has been trained to use our observation procedures, without being told which are the program and which the comparison schools, or even that a special program is going on. They make repeated visits to program and comparison classrooms throughout the school year. The evidence from these observations shows that, while some teachers have done a better job at implementation than others, the program schools are much higher overall than the comparison schools in use of each of the major elements of the program. As can be seen in Figure 1, the program teachers:

- Make greater use of the combination of elements we call Developmental Discipline--which includes giving students more autonomy and more say in the classroom, developing a warmer and more supportive classroom atmosphere, minimizing the use of rewards and punishments, and using a problem-solving approach to discipline;
- Use cooperative group learning more;
- Involve students more in helping each other, and in providing help to the entire classroom community;

- Make greater efforts to highlight the importance and relevance of prosocial values in the classroom; and
- Make greater efforts to promote interpersonal understanding among their students, through the use and discussion of relevant literature, and through class meetings in which interpersonal issues and problems that have come up may be discussed.

Figure 1. Teachers' Implementation of the CDP Program
(from observers' data for grades K-6 in San Ramon)



How students see the classroom. Students have been asked for their views of what occurs in the classrooms in several interviews and in questionnaires given to them in third grade and above.

In one of these interviews, students were asked whether they had been involved in determining what the rules and norms should be for their classrooms. (It is an assumption of the program that students will have a stronger personal stake in the classroom community and its norms and rules if they have helped to develop them.) Many more of those in the program than the comparison classrooms said that students and teachers had worked together to develop the classroom rules (52% of the program students, compared to 11% of the comparison students). Program students' responses to questionnaires also indicated:

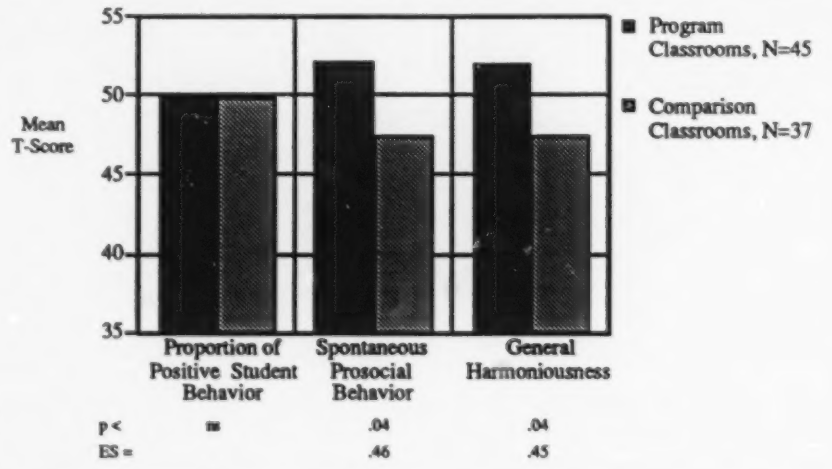
- More opportunities to make decisions about what they did in the classroom ($p<.01$, ES=.34);
- More supportive and helpful classmates ($p<.03$, ES=.29);

- A more "responsible" work atmosphere in the classroom (p<.06, ES=.25).

Effects of the Program on Students

Classroom behavior. The observers who visited the classrooms also looked at how students behaved toward one another. They found students in the program classrooms to be more considerate, helpful and cooperative, and program classrooms to be more harmonious, than comparison classrooms. These results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Students' Prosocial Classroom Behavior
(from observers' data for grades K-6 in San Ramon)

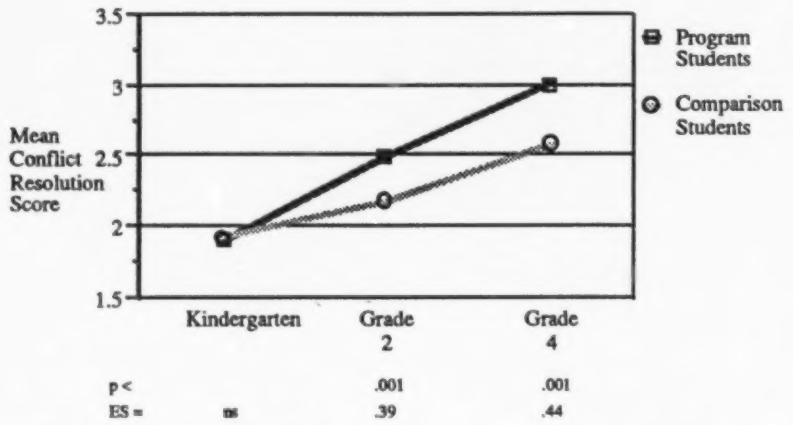


Student feelings, attitudes and skills. We have found several additional areas in which students benefit from attending a CDP school:

- Program students feel more accepted by their peers than comparison students: in a questionnaire given at sixth grade, they were less likely to say that they were lonely (p<.003; ES=.39), and more likely to say that they were well-liked by their classmates (p<.02; ES=.33) and had many friends at school (p<.005; ES=.36) -- and, in fact, program students were named as friends by more of their classmates than comparison students in a "sociometric" measure given at fifth grade (p<.05; ES=.40).

- Program students appear to be more socially competent than comparison students. Questionnaire measures indicate that they find it easier to work together with their classmates, get along with others, and make friends at school ($p<.04$; ES=.28); and that they are less likely to be beset by the problems of shyness ($p<.01$; ES=.45) and social anxiety ($p<.06$; ES=.26).
- Program students show evidence of a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of others ($p<.001$; ES=.61), and greater skill at solving interpersonal problems ($p<.01$; ES=.36).
- Program students were more likely to suggest solutions to conflicts that attempted to satisfy both parties (as shown in Figure 3).

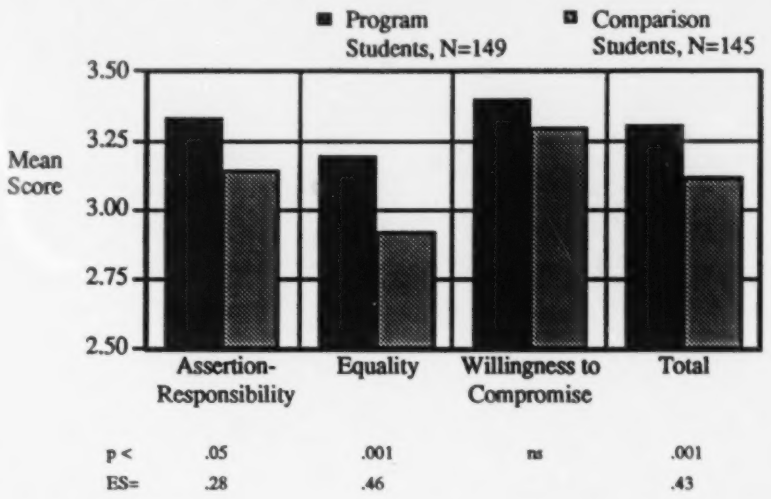
Figure 3. Conflict Resolution Skill
(from student interviews in San Ramon)



- As assessed in questionnaires, program students show a stronger commitment to such democratic values as maintaining equal participation and representation among group members, and expressing one's opinion even when it might be unpopular (shown in Figure 4).

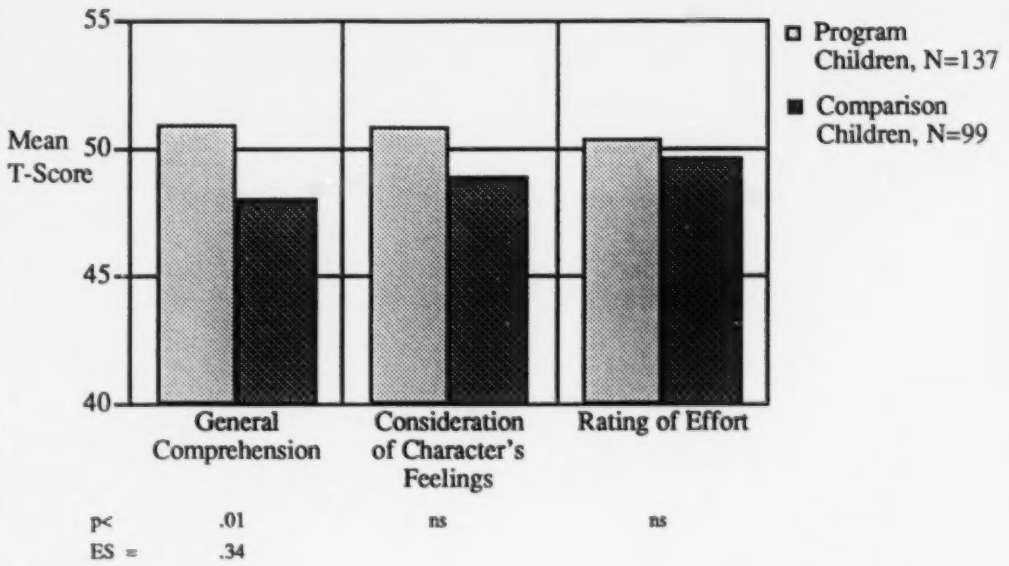
Figure 4. Democratic Values

(from fourth-grade student questionnaires in San Ramon)



Student achievement. Program and comparison students scored similarly on standardized, norm-referenced achievement tests administered by the San Ramon school district. Since students in this district generally score around the 90th percentile on such tests, there was little opportunity for the program to affect their performance. We expect that when such tests are given to initially lower-achieving students who have experienced the program for substantial lengths of time, they will show achievement gains. We think that CDP's major impacts on achievement, however, will ultimately be seen with measures that reflect deeper comprehension and critical thinking--because of the program's emphases on explanation, reflection, intrinsic motivation, and engagement with meaningful literature. We began to assess such aspects of achievement when the San Ramon students were in sixth grade, with a measure of higher-level reading comprehension--adapted from two measures recently developed by the Educational Testing Service. As expected, the program students scored significantly higher than the comparison students on this measure ($p<.01$; ES=.34).

Figure 5. Reading Comprehension (from sixth-grade student questionnaires)



Evaluation of the Program in Hayward

Data collection and analysis in Hayward, though still at an early stage, has also begun to show some promising findings. Classroom observations were conducted at one of two program schools before the start of the program and again at the end of the first year of program implementation. Preliminary analyses done so far show a number of positive changes in classroom practice. Compared to what was observed before the start of program training, the teachers had become:

- More sympathetic, warm, and personal toward students;
- More enthusiastic in their teaching;
- More responsive to differences among students in needs, feelings, and abilities; and
- More likely to highlight prosocial values in the ordinary course of classroom life.

After a year of program training, the teachers had also:

- Become more inclined to give their students autonomy, choice, and opportunities to make decisions in the classroom;
- Increased their emphasis on the learning of principles and concepts (relative to the learning of "facts") during academic lessons;
- Increased their stress on "intrinsic" reasons for engaging in academic and prosocial activities;
- Increased their use of cooperative learning groups;
- Decreased their use of lecturing; and
- Improved their ability to explain the purposes, procedures and needed skills for lessons.

Summary and Conclusions

These findings strongly suggest that the CDP program has helped to create a caring and supportive school environment in both the San Ramon and Hayward schools. Although at this point we have clear evidence about student outcomes only from the San Ramon district, there is definite evidence of program implementation at both sites. Data about student effects in Hayward will be available within the next two years.

To summarize the San Ramon student outcome data, consistent findings have been found in five areas. Program students:

- Behave more positively toward one another in the classrooms than do comparison students;
- Score higher on measures of interpersonal understanding;
- Score higher than comparison students on measures of social problem-solving (where they are more likely to consider the other person's viewpoint and to select resolution strategies that take account of that viewpoint, as well as one's own);
- More strongly endorse the importance of expressing one's own position, and of maintaining equal participation and representation among members in group decision-making; and

- Have more positive interpersonal feelings and perceptions in the classroom.

We believe that these findings, taken together, show that the program has influenced students' self-other balance. They have developed concern and consideration for others, but without sacrificing appropriate self-concern. They want their own opinions and concerns to be expressed and considered, but at the same time better understand the perspectives of others, and want to satisfy *their* needs and desires as well.

We are more tentative about the other positive findings that have been obtained because they have not as yet been replicated. These do, however, suggest that the program may also be having positive effects on students' social competence and social adjustment, and on higher-level reading comprehension. We plan to assess these variables again in our further investigations.

This project was initiated in the belief that schools can make an important difference in the social and moral development of children. We believe that the evidence already obtained demonstrates that this is the case during the elementary school years. These effects were achieved without causing any detriment to "standard" academic achievement; the evidence suggests, in fact, that the program may benefit students' higher-level learning, understanding and motivation. The combination of effects produced by this program could, we hope, have a significant impact on later life--in helping youth to cope with the problems of adolescence and beyond, while becoming more committed, responsible and productive citizens. Further research is needed to determine this.

In summary, the evidence indicates that the program has been well-implemented in its initial site, is well on the way to implementation in a second site, and can produce a range of positive effects on participating students. Whether these effects can be obtained in other settings and with other student populations, and whether they will persist as the children move into adolescence, will be actively investigated in Hayward and in a planned effort to extent the program to eight additional districts over the next five years.

Child Development Project

Developmental Studies Center, 111 Deerwood Place, Suite 165
San Ramon, CA 94583, 415-838-7633

What is the goal of the Child Development Project (CDP)?

The project's goal is to see whether teachers and parents of elementary school students, working together to provide a school and home program based on the best available research knowledge, can make a real difference in how caring and responsible students become. The project has been underway in California for the past eight years in selected schools in the suburban San Ramon district (15,000 enrollment) and during the past two years in the urban, ethnically diverse Hayward district (18,000 enrollment).

What is the rationale for CDP?

Because of deep changes in society, American education must take a more deliberate approach than ever before to children's social and moral development. The erosion of the nuclear and extended family, the declining influence of neighborhood and religious institutions, and the increased exposure of children to the mixed messages of our mass media all mean that schools and families must work together, starting early in the child's life, to nurture such "prosocial" qualities as helpfulness, responsibility, and concern for others. To be truly effective, such efforts should be an integral part of children's daily life in school and at home, and should be based on the best available research and theory in education and child development.

What difference does the research find in children who have the CDP program?

In San Ramon, an extremely comprehensive and rigorous evaluation of the program has shown several major effects. Students in three program schools as compared with their counterparts in three equivalent schools in the district 1) behave more considerately, helpfully, and cooperatively in their classrooms, and view their classmates as more caring and friendly; 2) have developed more sophisticated and prosocial conflict resolution skills and tendencies; 3) are more committed to such democratic values as standing up for one's opinions — even when those opinions might be unpopular — and giving others involved in a decision a chance to express their views; and 4) feel less lonely, report having more friends at school, and are named as friends by more of their classmates.

In Hayward, effects are already evident even though the program is still being phased in. Teachers in the two current program schools are warmer and more positive toward students, give them more autonomy and choice, and place more emphasis on intrinsic motivation. Students' classroom behavior shows increased spontaneous cooperation, friendliness, and "group spirit," and decreased disruptive behavior.

What are the key elements of the CDP classroom program?

CDP's approach to classroom management and discipline?

The CDP approach to classroom management and discipline, which we call "developmental discipline," regards the child as intrinsically motivated to construct a personal moral system, and to conform to adult expectations (although it recognizes that children are motivated by self-interest as well). Its goal is self-discipline and a strong personal commitment to core values. It focuses on 1) building the child's sense of being part of a caring, mutually respectful classroom community; 2) teaching children the moral principles that underlie our standards and rules of conduct; 3) giving children chances to help develop rules and norms, and to participate in planning and problem-solving in the classroom; and 4) using discipline situations as teaching opportunities.

CDP's approach to cooperative learning?

Our approach differs from other forms of cooperative learning in that 1) it focuses on children's academic and social learning simultaneously, and it makes both kinds of learning the subject of explicit discussion and review with the children; and 2) it does not use extrinsic motivators, such as group grades and inter-group competition. Instead it seeks to provide students with academic group tasks that are inherently interesting and challenging, to establish small-group dynamics and a classroom ethos that foster collaboration and a concern for the well-being of others, and to encourage students to take increasingly more responsibility for their learning and behavior.

CDP's literature program, "Reading, Thinking, and Caring"?

Our approach is quite similar to what is now considered state-of-the-art teaching of reading and language arts. Its emphasis is on 1) using good children's literature rather than simplified basal material; 2) reading aloud to children throughout the elementary grades; 3) building higher-order understanding; and 4) melding discussion, reading, and writing as an effective approach to literacy. What is unusual about the CDP program is the careful selection of quality books, stories, and poems that convey core values and enhance children's understanding of themselves, diverse others, and the human condition.

What are the key elements of the schoolwide program?

CDP's schoolwide policies and practices are intended to build students' sense of membership in a caring community, to highlight the core values of that community, to provide opportunities for children to practice those values, and to involve parents directly in supporting these efforts. Some of the activities are ongoing, such as tutoring and buddies; some are "special events" such as heritage week, grandparents day, various charity drives, and assemblies that build a sense of community.

What part of the schoolwide program is especially successful?

The buddies program is special in that it requires relatively little in the way of extra resources and planning time, it is engaging and rewarding for both the older and younger children, and it seems to have a strong positive effect on the overall school climate.

What are the program implications for schoolwide discipline policies and practices?

CDP points away from policies and practices that are "legalistic" in tone or reward/punishment-based, and toward ones that emphasize general moral principles and that communicate confidence in children's own moral capacities.

What are the key elements of the home-school program?

A key element, and a real innovation, is "family homework" — homework for students and their parents that is usually tied to the academic curriculum and that also fosters communication and sharing of values within the family. These activities are sent home once or twice a month.

A second aspect of the home-school program is the activities that involve the whole family: cooperative science fairs, family film nights (during which a prosocial film is shown, accompanied by a family discussion activity), family math workshops, and so on. We often have a turnout of 100 to 200 people for such an event at the school.

How does the program fit with the academic mission of our schools?

Much of the program is an inseparable part of the teaching of academics, since it shapes the content of the lesson (for example, the literature that is read) or the process by which the lesson is taught (for example, cooperative learning, whole-class or small-group discussions focused on gaining higher-order understanding). Other parts of the program, such as developmental discipline, directly help academic learning to proceed more effectively by building involvement and reducing problems or conflicts, or by enabling students to consolidate their own learning while contributing to the learning of younger children in tutoring or buddies programs.

What forms of academic achievement can it be expected to affect?

In San Ramon, where students already score around the 90th percentile on the state's standardized achievement tests, showing an improvement is extremely difficult; up until last year, students in the program schools performed as well as their counterparts in the comparison schools, but not significantly better. What is very encouraging, however, is the performance of sixth graders on a test just developed by the Educational Testing Service. It is a test designed specifically to measure higher-order reading comprehension, so it is a test that better matches the

academic focus of our program. On this new test program students significantly outperformed their counterparts. In Hayward, where students currently score in the 30th to 40th percentile on standardized tests, we are hoping to show broad improvement, but we have no test data yet.

What resources are necessary for the program to be successfully implemented?

San Ramon and Hayward teachers receive the equivalent of 11-13 days of in-service training over the course of a year. Five of these days are during a summer institute. The remaining days are spaced over the school year. Each teacher is also observed in his or her classroom by a CDP staff member or fellow teacher once every week or two during the year. These observations are the basis for follow-up discussions and coaching. Two or three years of involvement may be needed for teachers to become proficient at using the entire program.

Materials provided to teachers include background reading on program goals and educational philosophy, guidelines for program implementation, a variety of curriculum materials for cooperative learning, a K-6 set of literature-based reading materials, and a set of family homework activities to be sent home periodically for parents and students to complete together.

Because the program is so ambitious and complex, leadership is essential to its success. Both the central administration and the principal must be knowledgeable, publicly committed, and willing to provide teachers with the time and encouragement necessary for them to master the classroom program and integrate it into their daily routines. The leadership must actively inform and involve parents, so that parents are also fully knowledgeable about the classroom program and are able to participate directly in the planning and staging of the schoolwide and home-school program activities.

"Political" considerations: Reactions from teachers, administrators, parents

Most elementary school teachers and administrators believe that they ought to be nurturing children's social, emotional, and moral development as well as their academic growth. Most see the CDP program as a resource for accomplishing this. Some teachers worry about their already tight schedule of standard academic lessons, and so are concerned about the time required for some of the learning-centered (contrasted with teaching-centered) activities the program encourages. Overall, however, the program has struck an extremely responsive chord in elementary education, and has been singled out as exemplary by several major educational associations, including the American Association of School Administrators, the National School Board Association, and the National Council for the Social Studies.

Parents find the program appealing because they are as concerned about their children's character as they are about academic achievement. They want their schools to foster such values as fairness, helpfulness, and concern for others — especially when this is done as an integral part of the educational process. The CDP program has not been controversial because it emphasizes values that are shared by virtually everyone and are central to a democratic, decent, humane society — and because it uses educationally sound approaches to strengthen those values.

January 1990